

Ian Shanahan (1988–1991)

– *To Warren Burt, Dr Eric Gross, ‘CS’, Dulcie Holland, and Graeme Petrie*

For adventurous recorder-players:

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# *Five Études*

for

solo recorder

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1. ***Helical Ribbon*** (1990),
a terse étude
for alto recorder.

2. ***Lingua Silens Florum*** (3.6.1991),
a garland
for prepared alto recorder.

3. ***Cathy's Song*** (3.4.1988),
an encore piece
for sopranino (or alto) recorder.

4. ***Dysfunctional Habañera*** (1990),
for alto recorder.

5. ***Graeme Petrie, scallywag*** (1990),
for alto recorder.

PROGRAMME ANNOTATIONS

Five Études

for solo recorder

Ian Shanahan (1988–1991)

These five miniature studies, each lasting less than a minute, focus upon particular aspects of contemporary recorder technique. However, beyond serving merely a didactic or pedagogical function, I also envisaged them as being (hopefully) rather effective individual encore pieces, or brief, but eye-opening, 'fillers' – taken either alone, or collectively – between more substantial musical items.

1. *Helical Ribbon* (1990), a terse étude for alto recorder.

This unassuming and innocuous little piece is respectfully dedicated to my esteemed colleague Warren Burt, a singular individual and composer from Melbourne who works tirelessly for the cause of new music. It was written specifically for the occasion of him being presented with a "Sounds Australian Award" in April 1990. The one-page original manuscript – and my world première performance – of **Helical Ribbon** was his prize!

Consequently, this piece embraces several features that are perhaps representative of Warren's composeserly predilections, aesthetics and philosophies (as well as my own): scientific cross-references and applied paradigms, unique microtonal structures, and 'funk'. For instance, the "Helical" of my title provides a conceptual metaphor, only vaguely mirrored in the music, alluding to the distinctive double spiral/helix construction of the deoxyribosenucleic acid (DNA) molecule, human life's building-block; the 22 microtonal sonorities that almost entirely comprise the work are paragons of vertical dimensionality from the recorder's multiphonic sound-world, and so justify acoustically the title's "Ribbon" (instead of a linear, uni-dimensional monodic 'curve', typical of the recorder's conventional repertoire), at the same time obliquely referring to Warren's entry within John Jenkins' recent and important book **22 Australian Composers**.

Helical Ribbon, less than a minute in duration, serves a dual musical function – both as a deliberately shocking yet straightforward encore piece (to follow a concert of more traditional concert music), and as a pithy, rather challenging technical study for adventurous recorder-players who wish to become acquainted with the vast multiphonic capabilities of the alto recorder.

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2. *Lingua Silens Florum* (3.6.1991), a garland for prepared alto recorder.

"It is said that the Buddha once gave a sermon without saying a word;
he merely held up a flower to his listeners.
This was the famous 'Flower Sermon',
a sermon in the language of patterns,
the *silent language of flowers*."

György Doczi, **The Power of Limits**, p.1.

This very brief and gentle work (in which the alto recorder is 'prepared' by blocking the instrument's endhole airtight with Blutac) is dedicated to Dr Eric Gross, upon his retirement

from the position of Associate Professor in the Department of Music at the University of Sydney. I premièred it at his Farewell Concert, as the first of a number of short 'garlands' in a musical Festschrift offered to the esteemed professor. Besides being just an exercise in breath- and articulatory-control, one hopes that the subtle floral patterning of the music in **Lingua Silens Florum** transcends mundanity, and captures something of the essence of the man.

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3. *Cathy's Song* (3.4.1988), an encore piece for sopranino (or alto) recorder.

This vignette is totally atypical of my compositional output! At the time it was written (over a period of about four hours during the early morning of 3 April 1988 [Easter Sunday], whilst I was rather inebriated and thoroughly miserable), I recall feeling an illogical but ineluctable concern – alcohol-induced paranoia? – that I had lost the ability to write truly tuneful music ... something I have always been readily able to do, but by choice do not normally indulge in. (I also wanted to prove a point [to certain musical reactionaries]: that *at least some composers who write music which is not overtly 'melodic' do so not just because they are incapable of composing 'a decent tune'*.) Anyway, the outcome of this unhappy state was a very brisk, joyful, and bubbly little melodic piece, about one minute long, which contains quite a few quirkish rhythmic and modal twists (in the manner of Ross Edwards' fashionable *maninya* style, only much more so?). I do trust that **Cathy's Song**'s idiosyncratic attributes lift it beyond mere conservatism, which is something that I would hate to be accused of! I myself normally play **Cathy's Song** from memory, as a fun encore piece, but this isn't obligatory. At one level, this title makes reference to a vaguely similar tune by that wonderful Australian jazz composer and vibraphonist John Sangster, **Kaffir Song** – but there are private, more personal, connotations...

© Ian Shanahan, Sydney, Australia; 17 September 1989.

4. *Dysfunctional Habañera* (1990), for alto recorder.

5. *Graeme Petrie, scallywag* (1990), for alto recorder.

Way back in 1990, my friend Benjamin Thorn asked me to compose two little recorder pieces ("Two Brief Studies"), each concentrating on just one technique – but "not too difficult, please!" – for inclusion in the second volume of the Currency Press series **Recorders at Large**, edited by Ben. (Alas, I guess that I failed his 'easiness prerequisite', since neither composition surfaced within this anthology – although I tried so hard to be 'amateur-friendly', really I did, sir...; hence the manuscripts of these two hitherto-unnamed studies have been accumulating dust on top of my filing cabinet ever since!)

Anyhow, **Dysfunctional Habañera** is dedicated to the venerable Australian composer (and quondam recorder-player) Dulcie Holland – who is anything but dysfunctional! This conferment is a mark of my affection and respect for Dulcie; therefore, my miniature's musical language lies not too far from her own (notwithstanding my microtonality). If, by the way, you are wondering why this piece carries the sobriquet '*dysfunctional* habañera' ... then try dancing a proper habañera to it! There is, moreover, a kind of rhythmic hesitancy within its feel – due, perhaps, to the inertial, slightly sluggish response of its microtonal pitch-sets, which have all been generated by weird static fingerings (only one fingering-configuration is allotted per bar!).

When I became a member of staff in the Music Department at the University of Western Sydney (Nepean) during February 1996, it was my distinct pleasure to encounter

Graeme Petrie, who is one of the department's more interesting undergraduate students. Although it cannot be said that Graeme shines academically, he is nonetheless a real 'character', a bit of a larrikin – full of life, musicality and mischief, a talented trumpet-playing libidinous slightly bibulous hoon! (He is simply too likeable ever to chastise severely – even when he truly deserves it... Graeme just makes my job in academe that much more *enjoyable*, so no prizes for guessing who this miniature's dedicatee is!) My quaint title here is obviously a play on the name of Claude Debussy's comical cake-walk from Book II of his piano **Préludes: Général Lavine—Eccentric**. The cheeky, insouciant multiphonic sound-milieu of my little recorder étude just encapsulates Monsieur Petrie's personality so well in my mind that I could not resist designating it **Graeme Petrie, scallywag**. (*En passant*, Graeme must polish the roof of my old Holden Kingswood sedan before he graduates, for reasons I shan't go into here...)

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Helical Ribbon, commissioned by the Australian Music Centre [Sounds Australian], was premièred by Ian Shanahan during the Sounds Australian Awards Presentation Night, the Sydney Dance Company Space, Pier One, Hickson Road, Walsh Bay, Sydney, on 11 April 1990. **Lingua Silens Florum**, commissioned by the Music Department of the University of Sydney, was premièred by Ian Shanahan during the Eric Gross Farewell Concert, the Everest Theatre, Seymour Centre, the University of Sydney, on 8 August 1991. **Cathy's Song** was performed by Ian Shanahan during "Recorders Unlimited", a concert held at The Old Darlington School, the University of Sydney, on 8 December 1989.

Recordings of **Helical Ribbon**, **Lingua Silens Florum**, **Cathy's Song**, **Dysfunctional Habanera**, and **Graeme Petrie, scallywag**, all played by the composer, are now commercially available on the Compact Disc "Echoes/Fantasies" (Broad Music Records Jade JAD CD 1088).

Heavily edited computer-generated scores of **Helical Ribbon** and **Cathy's Song** were published within the anthology "Recorders at Large, Volume 2" (ed. Benjamin Thorn), Currency Press [ISBN 086819-439-5], Sydney, 1995. A computer-generated score of **Lingua Silens Florum** has been published by Red House Editions (Edition No. RH 938), Footscray, VIC, Australia.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

1. **HELICAL RIBBON** (1990), A TERSE ÉTUDE FOR ALTO RECORDER.

PREAMBLE

In addition to its didactic/pedagogical purpose, this rather brief work might also be useful as a *genuinely surprising* encore piece after a primarily traditional recorder recital (incorporating the usual Early Music repertoire) – in which case it really ought to be performed from memory. **Helical Ribbon** is not as terrifying as it looks on first appearance! Whilst some memorization will indeed be necessary, internal repetitions of chains of multiphonics – all of which are numbered within the score, as a mnemonic aid – eases this task. In this regard, the recorder-player is encouraged to discover the piece's structure, prior to attempting rehearsal of it. Then ... I suggest that the fingerings be practised in sequence (temporarily ignoring the rhythms). Once all fingering-patterns have been corporealized and are completely natural for the executant, **Helical Ribbon** can then be learnt in the usual ways.

ARTICULATION AND RHYTHM

All articulation – *legato*, *tenuto*, *mezzo staccato*, *staccato*, etc. – should be strictly observed. The following special articulations are also utilized in **Helical Ribbon**:

× – *fingerslap solo*. Articulate with fingers only! Do not blow into the recorder. Slap the left-hand index finger down as hard as possible onto its fingerhole (as designated by the × in the tablature pictograph). Such an action yields a delicate percussive sonority, clearly pitched as indicated.

×
● – *fingerslap + blowing*. Using exactly the same vigorous finger-action as described above, blow into the recorder normally, thereby producing the multiphonic as well.

5
└ – *lateral lamino-palatal tongue-click, unvoiced*. A strong (partial) vacuum is created between the blade of the tongue and the hard palate. Release it laterally (with the side of the tongue), as loudly and as forcefully as possible. Such a tongue-click yields a sound that is sometimes used for encouraging horses.

✱ – *tongue-tremolo*. Articulate, as *quickly and as evenly as possible*, the (double-tonguing) phonemes '[dʒɪdlɪdlɪdlɪdlɪ...]' – as in "fiddle".

✱ – *fluttersonguing*. A 'trilling' of the tongue-tip against the alveolar ridge.

All rhythms must be played precisely, with a very 'funky' feel.

MULTIPHONIC FINGERINGS AND DYNAMICS

Multiphonic research for **Helical Ribbon** was carried out upon an ebony Moeck Rottenburgh alto recorder. *All* multiphonic fingerings provided within the score are to be strictly adhered to: absolutely *no* modifications of fingering are permitted! (For multiphonics 16, 17 and 19 though, a very slight shading of the left-hand middle fingerhole – as shown within their tablature pictographs – is permissible, in order to facilitate reliable and rapid multiphonic production.)

Unless otherwise specified, dynamic levels are unambiguously defined by the breath-requirements necessary to generate the multiphonics such that their constituent pitches

are evenly balanced.

MICROTONES

The twenty-two alto recorder multiphonics employed within **Helical Ribbon** (as well as their resultant combination tones) define a unique micro-intervallic pitch-set, which will naturally be transformed whenever these multiphonics are performed – with the given fixed fingerings – upon any alto recorders that encompass different structural characteristics. The following symbology for *microtones* is employed in **Helical Ribbon**:

♯ and ♭ denote a *quartertone above* ♮, and a *quartertone below* ♮, respectively.

Arrowheads upon any accidentals denote slight intonational deviations – up to about an eighthtone – in the given direction.

VIBRATO

If used at all in **Helical Ribbon**, vibrato (in particular, air-column vibrato) is to be employed very sparingly, with discretion and 'good taste'.

Enjoy yourself, and good luck!

© Ian Shanahan, Sydney, Australia; 20 March 1990.

2. **LINGUA SILENS FLORUM** (3.6.1991), A GARLAND FOR PREPARED ALTO RECORDER.

PREAMBLE

This rather brief étude (duration: approximately 50 seconds!) is dedicated to Dr Eric Gross, Associate Professor of Music at the University of Sydney, upon his retirement. Aside from its rôle as a Festschrift 'garland' offering, **Lingua Silens Florum** fulfils a didactic purpose, and so may function as a study for student recorder-players – an exercise in breath- and articulatory-control. (It might even be useful as an encore piece, in which case it really should be performed from memory.)

PREPARATION OF THE ALTO RECORDER

It is imperative that the bore's endpoint, at the footjoint's endhole, be closed *absolutely airtight* for the duration of the work. I recommend the adhesion of a flat lozenge of "Blutac", "Bostik", "Plasticine", or some other malleable gummy substance to the bell, covering over the endhole completely. Such a preparation modifies the timbral, dynamic, and intonational response of the instrument; pitches somewhat below the alto recorder's regular gamut may be generated as well.

AMPLIFICATION

Because the alto recorder's dynamic level is greatly attenuated on account of its preparation, some sound-reinforcement, with a high-quality cardioid or omnidirectional air microphone, may be obligatory in performance spaces that demand considerable degrees of sonic projection. However, amplification must always be kept to a minimum, and in any case ought to be as 'natural'-sounding as possible: the delicate ambience of **Lingua Silens Florum** must be preserved.

FINGERINGS AND DYNAMICS

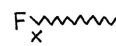
Research of fingering-resources for **Lingua Silens Florum** was carried out upon an ebony Moeck Rottenburgh alto recorder, prepared as described above. Every fingering-indication provided within the score is to be strictly adhered to: any modifications of fingering are outlawed! Pitches without tablature pictographs beneath the stave are to be played with their standard fingerings (only), unless an obvious repetitive pattern exists – in which case the fingerings are designated through circled numerical references to previous fingerings. To a large extent, each tone's dynamic level is circumscribed by the prevailing fingerings. Otherwise, dynamic nuances are left to the discretion of the recorder-player.

MICROTONES

The following symbology for *microtones* is employed in **Lingua Silens Florum**:

♯ and ♭ denote a *quartertone above* ♮, and a *quartertone below* ♮, respectively. Arrowheads upon any accidentals denote slight intonational deviations – up to about an eighthtone – in the given direction.

FINGERVIBRATO, AND VIBRATO IN GENERAL

F  denotes a *fingervibrato* with *fingerslapping* (repeatedly slapping the indicated finger down, as hard as possible, onto its fingerhole). Its fingering- and trilling-action are specified by the tablature pictograph below the stave.

Other varieties of vibrato – in particular, air-column vibrato – are to be employed very sparingly, with discretion and 'good taste'. Beyond the caesura (comma) *all vibrato is expressly forbidden!*

ARTICULATION AND RHYTHM

All articulation – *legato*, *tenuto*, *mezzo staccato*, *staccato*, etc. – should be strictly observed. Rhythms must be played precisely (but not mechanically).

GRACE NOTES

Grace notes lie 'outside time'. They should be executed quite quickly, but not too fast.

BREATHING AND PAUSES

Breathing should be accomplished as furtively and as efficiently as possible. The comma denotes a slight caesura, not necessarily for the purpose of taking a breath.

THE CLOSING MULTIPHONIC

The final multiphonic – gentle and fuzzy – should embrace both constituent tones in a fairly well-balanced fashion (as shown by the horizontal line contour), without the slightest hint of a wobble. It is secured merely by augmenting the breath-pressure, *carefully*, beyond that required for the previous low tone. Do not sustain it too long!

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
3. CATHY'S SONG (3.4.1988), AN ENCORE PIECE FOR SOPRANINO (OR ALTO) RECORDER.

PREAMBLE

Cathy's Song is intended to be used primarily as an encore piece after a concert performance. In such a context, it should ideally be played *from memory*, without the printed music! Alternatively, since **Cathy's Song** is not exceedingly difficult, it is suitable for public performance by competent recorder-players of any age. There are, however, various technical demands that the piece makes upon the recorder-player, particularly in relation to breath-control, fingering, articulation and rhythm. When **Cathy's Song** has been mastered, both technically and musically, the interpreter might then begin to think of themselves as being a good recorder-player! **Cathy's Song** is to be performed on either a *sopranino recorder* or an *alto recorder* – though personally, I much prefer to play this piece (and to hear it) on the sopranino. Furthermore, I find that the piece is not particularly well-suited to the sound of the soprano recorder, so I request that you do *not* play it on that size of instrument! (This injunction may encourage a reluctant amateur recorder-player to sharpen their technical and [sight-]reading skills on the F instruments of the recorder family.) I have included within the score of **Cathy's Song** a couple of alternative fingerings that the amateur recorder-player might find useful. Here are some further technical and interpretative remarks:

ARTICULATION AND RHYTHM


Articulations are to be more-or-less strictly adhered to in **Cathy's Song**. Likewise, all rhythms herein must be played *precisely* (but not mechanically: *feel it!*). Dynamics on the other hand are largely at the discretion of the recorder-player!

- – *tenuto*: sustain the note for its full duration, without any additional accentuation.
-  – *diaphragm thrust*: without *tonguing*, accentuate the note's attack by aspirating air into the instrument with a jolt or thrust from the diaphragm (but not so much as to cause the note to overblow into a higher register).

BREATHING AND PAUSES

- ◌ – *comma*: take a breath (*short pause*).
- (◌) – *parenthesized comma*: take a breath if necessary. Breath may be drawn in, as furtively and as efficiently as possible, at other phraseologically and structurally appropriate places in the music, as necessary – but do please breathe as little as possible!

PORTAMENTO

-  – *portamento*: connect the two pitches smoothly and (more-or-less) continuously by *sliding* the appropriate finger sideways *across* its fingerhole. The duration of this gliding action corresponds approximately to the initial rhythmic value. (NB: the final portamento of **Cathy's Song** is *optional*.) At any rate, the effect is *never* to be exaggerated.

Good luck, and enjoy yourself!

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4. DYSFUNCTIONAL HABAÑERA (1990), FOR ALTO RECORDER.

ARTICULATION AND RHYTHM

All articulation – *legato*, *tenuto*, *mezzo staccato*, *staccato*, etc. – should be strictly observed. Rhythms must be played precisely, but habañera-like.

FINGERINGS AND DYNAMICS

Research of fingering-resources for **Dysfunctional Habañera** was carried out upon an ebony Moeck Rottenburgh alto recorder. Every fingering-indication provided within the score is to be strictly adhered to: any modifications of fingering are outlawed! Each fingering is to be *held constant* until the next fingering-configuration is provided (at the beginning of the next bar). Within each bar, the different pitches are obtained purely through the exercising of articulatory- and breath-control! To a large extent, each pitch's dynamic level is circumscribed by the prevailing fingering.

MICROTONES

The following symbology for *microtones* is employed in **Dysfunctional Habañera**:

♯ and ♭ denote a *quartertone above* ♮, and a *quartertone below* ♮, respectively.
Arrowheads upon any accidentals denote slight intonational deviations – up to about an eighthtone – in the given direction.

BREATHING AND PAUSES

Breathing should be accomplished as furtively and as efficiently as possible. The comma denotes a slight caesura, not necessarily for the purpose of taking a breath.

Enjoy yourself!

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5. GRAEME PETRIE, SCALLYWAG (1990), FOR ALTO RECORDER.

ARTICULATION AND RHYTHM

All articulation – *legato*, *tenuto*, *mezzo staccato*, *staccato*, etc. – should be strictly observed. Rhythms must be played *precisely*, but “flowing easily”.

MULTIPHONIC FINGERINGS AND DYNAMICS

Multiphonic research for **Graeme Petrie, scallywag** was carried out upon an ebony Moeck Rottenburgh alto recorder. *All* multiphonic fingerings provided within the score are to be strictly adhered to: absolutely *no* modifications of fingering are permitted!

Unless otherwise specified, dynamic levels are unambiguously defined by the breath-requirements necessary to generate the multiphonics such that their component tones are *equally balanced*.

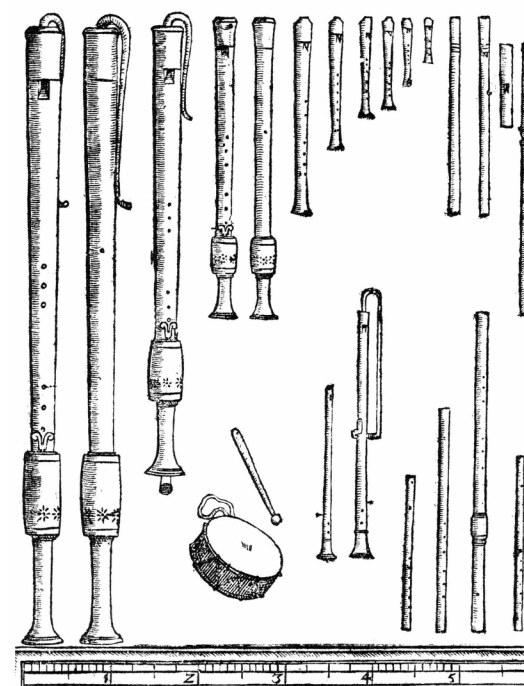
MICROTONES

The fourteen alto recorder multiphonics employed within **Graeme Petrie, scallywag** (as well as their resultant combination tones) define a unique micro-intervallic pitch-set, which will naturally be transformed whenever these multiphonics are performed – with the given fixed fingerings – upon any alto recorders that encompass different structural characteristics. The following symbology for *microtones* is employed in **Graeme Petrie, scallywag**:

♯ and ♭ denote a *quartertone above* ♮, and a *quartertone below* ♮, respectively.
Arrowheads upon any accidentals denote slight intonational deviations – up to about an eighthtone – in the given direction.

Have fun!

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Helical Ribbon

♩ = c. 140 (or more). Really funky, rhythmic, energetic: always driving forward.

Respectfully offered to WARREN BURT,
on receiving a well-deserved Sounds
Australian Award.

© Ian Shanghan, 1990.

1.

4.

8.

Raunchy!

13.

16. *echo (p)* *f poss.* *Beginning again...*

19. *c.3"* *a brief, random mixture of tongue-tremolo and fluttertonguing.* *(✓) c.4"* *breath-flow: absolutely steady.* *(terminate the multiphonic cleanly.)* *poco*

Maintain your physical attitude: do not move!

(Now relax...)

21.

c.4" *FINE.* *Sydney, AUSTRALIA. 3 March, 1990.*

THE 22 MULTIPHONICS — in order of appearance.

Lingua Silens Florum

♩ = c. 77. Plaintive, distant, mysterious: soft and delicate, but expressive.

1. Prepared: end of footjoint closed airtight (■).

5. F

10.

14.

FINE.

c. 50"

Sydney, AUSTRALIA. 3 June, 1991.

© Ian Shanahan, 1991.

Cathy's Song

Quite fast, joyous and full of life! ♩ = c. 141 [♩ = c. 94].

© Ian Shanahan, 1988.

1. Impish.

[8]

Dynamics are at the discretion of the recorder player.

7.

[8]

Hold back ----- //

Tempo as before (or a bit faster), with added energy.

12.

[8]

18.

[8]

(9)

25. Imperious!

Exuberant!

Lyrical, expressive.

Hold back ----- // Tempo I.

35.

Impish.

41.

Hold back ----- // Tempo I.

46.

Maintain your position ('freeze') for a few seconds... (Now relax...)

fade away very slightly...

FINE.

c. 60"

J. L. Shum

Sydney, AUSTRALIA. 3.25 - 7.00 a.m., 3 April, 1988 [Easter Sunday] - No sleep again! (And misery.)

Dysfunctional Habañera

Habañera-like. ♩ = c. 65-74.

slow down a bit. -----

1.

-----slightly slower.

6.

original tempo...

Be still!

10.

c. 30"

Sydney, AUSTRALIA. 1990.

Graeme Petrie, scallywag

Flowing easily: cheeky! ♩ = c. 60.

1. **4/8**

4.

7.

10.

slow trill down... stop trilling!

In one breath...

pp absolutely steady!...

FINE. *J. S. Shanahan*
Sydney, AUSTRALIA. 1990.